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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Association Nationale Al Hidn, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

The Association Nationale Al Hidn, a Moroccan association in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council that works in the areas of women's development, child protection and family support, welcomes the holding by the Commission on the Status of Women of its sixty-third session. It appreciates the Commission's choice of theme for the session, "Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls", and reaffirms the importance of social protection as a fundamental human right that guarantees human dignity and as a tool for social justice, empowerment and tackling poverty and inequality.

The Association would like to stress that social protection, gender equality and access to social and public services are closely linked to one another.

Social protection, as defined by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, consists of policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability and to strengthen people's economic and social resilience. The economic and social empowerment of women should be considered an essential element of social protection. There is, therefore, a need to establish or strengthen inclusive and gender-sensitive social protection systems with programmes and policies that take into account the needs and priorities of women, given their diverse roles both inside and outside the family.

The Association Nationale Al Hidn also advocates investing more in social programmes and policies, extending their scope beyond the limits of mere safety nets and help tools, focusing on the need to facilitate access by women to such services, and strengthening family-focused social protection systems in general.

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